CLAIMS

We claim:

1. In a system capable of real-time communication with one or more contacts at one or more other systems, a method of tracking real-time communication data, within a single contact tracking application that tracks real-time communication data for real-time communication using any of a plurality of diverse real-time communication providers and applications, the method comprising acts of:

receiving, at a global real-time communication data store, real-time communication data from each of a plurality of diverse real-time communication applications corresponding to a plurality of diverse real-time communication providers;

querying the global real-time communication data store for real-time communication data corresponding to one or more contacts that are dynamically determined at the global real-time communication data store, based on one or more properties associated with the real-time communication data, to be one or more recent contacts; and

displaying the one or more recent contacts on a user interface generated by the contact tracking application.

2. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the one or more properties comprise a most recent communication time for the one or more contacts, and wherein display of the one or more recent contacts is ordered on the user interface by most recent communication time.

3. A method as recited in claim 1, further comprising acts of:

querying the global real-time communication data store for real-time communication data corresponding to one or more contacts identified as pinned contacts for which display of the corresponding real-time communication data is preferred; and

displaying at least one of the one or more pinned contacts on the user interface generated by the contact tracking application.

4. A method as recited in claim 3, wherein the user interface generated by the contact tracking application comprises separate pinned contact and recent contact portions.

5. A method as recited in claim 4, wherein the pinned contact user interface portion varies in size based the number of one or more contacts identified as a pinned contact.

6. A method as recited in claim 3, wherein the real-time communication data corresponding to the one or more pinned contacts comprises presence.

7. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the real-time communication data corresponding to the one or more contacts dynamically determined to be one or more recent contacts comprises status.

8. A method as recited in claim 1, further comprising an act of displaying a link on the user interface for adding a new contact.

9. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the user interface displays a plurality of contacts from diverse service providers, the method further comprising acts of:

receiving user input to select a specific contact;

selecting the specific contact;

receiving user input to begin a new real-time conversation with the specific contact; and

sending a request for a new real-time conversation to the specific contact

10. For a system capable of real-time communication with one or more contacts at one or more other systems, a computer program product comprising one or more computer readable media carrying computer executable instructions that implement a method of tracking real-time communication data, within a single contact tracking application that tracks real-time communication data for real-time communication using any of a plurality of diverse real-time communication providers or applications, the method comprising acts of:

receiving, at a global real-time communication data store, real-time communication data from each of a plurality of diverse real-time communication applications corresponding to a plurality of diverse real-time communication providers;

querying the global real-time communication data store for real-time communication data corresponding to one or more contacts that are dynamically determined at the global real-time communication data store, based on one or more properties associated with the real-time communication data, to be one or more recent contacts; and

displaying the one or more recent contacts on a user interface generated by the contact tracking application.

11. A computer program product as recited in claim 10, wherein the one or more properties comprise a communication count for the one or more contacts, and wherein display of the one or more recent contacts is ordered on the user interface by communication count.

12. A computer program product as recited in claim 10, the method further comprising acts of:

querying the global real-time communication data store for real-time communication data corresponding to one or more contacts identified as pinned contacts for which display of the corresponding real-time communication data is preferred; and

displaying at least one of the one or more pinned contacts on the user interface generated by the contact tracking application.

13. A computer program product as recited in claim 12, wherein the user interface generated by the contact tracking application comprises separate pinned contact and recent contact portions.

14. A computer program product as recited in claim 13, wherein the recent contact user interface portion varies in size based the number of one or more contacts identified as a pinned contact.

15. A computer program product as recited in claim 12, wherein the real-time communication data corresponding to the one or more pinned contacts comprises status.

16. A computer program product as recited in claim 10, wherein the real-time communication data corresponding to the one or more contacts dynamically determined to be one or more recent contacts comprises unread messages.

17. A computer program product as recited in claim 10, the method further comprising an act of displaying a text entry box on the user interface for searching for a contact.

18. A computer program product as recited in claim 10, the method further comprising an act of periodically requesting real-time communication data from at least one of the plurality of diverse real-time communication applications.

19. A computer program product as recited in claim 10, wherein the global real-time communication data store automatically receives real-time communication data from at least one of the plurality of diverse real-time communication applications, without having to make a request.

20. A computer program product as recited in claim 10, wherein the user interface displays a plurality of contacts from diverse service providers, the method further comprising acts of:

receiving user input to select a specific contact;

selecting the specific contact;

receiving user input to begin a new e-mail message for the specific contact; and

opening a new e-mail message for the specific contact.

21. A computer program product as recited in claim 10, wherein a particular contact is displayed as a pinned contact, the method further comprising acts of:

receiving an indication at the global real-time communication data store that the particular contact is no longer a pinned contact; and

updating the user interface to remove the particular contact as a pinned contact.

22. A computer program product as recited in claim 10, the method further comprising acts of:

receiving user input to display all contacts; and

displaying a separate flyout user interface for displaying all contacts.

23. In a system capable of real-time communication with one or more contacts at one or more other systems, a method of tracking real-time communication data, within a single contact tracking application that tracks real-time communication data for real-time communication using any of a plurality of diverse real-time communication providers and applications, the method comprising steps for:

synchronizing a global real-time communication data store with real-time communication data from each of a plurality of diverse real-time communication applications corresponding to a plurality of diverse real-time communication providers;

retrieving real-time communication data from the global real-time communication data store that corresponds to one or more contacts which are dynamically determined at the global real-time communication data store, based on one or more properties associated with the real-time communication data, to be one or more recent contacts; and

generating a user interface for displaying the one or more recent contacts.

24. A method as recited in claim 23, wherein the one or more properties comprise a communication time for the one or more contacts, and wherein display of the one or more recent contacts is ordered on the user interface by communication time.

25. A method as recited in claim 23, further comprising steps for:

retrieving, from the global real-time communication data store, real-time communication data corresponding to one or more contacts identified as pinned contacts for which display of the corresponding real-time communication data is preferred; and

generating a user interface for displaying the one or more pinned contacts.

26. A method as recited in claim 25, wherein the generated user interface comprises separate pinned contact and recent contact portions.

27. A method as recited in claim 26, wherein the user interface generated by the contact tracking application is subject to being dynamically resized by user input.

28. A method as recited in claim 25, wherein the real-time communication data corresponding to the one or more pinned contacts comprises unread messages.

29. A method as recited in claim 23, wherein the real-time communication data corresponding to the one or more contacts dynamically determined to be one or more recent contacts comprises unread notifications data.

30. A method as recited in claim 23, wherein the generated user interface includes a plurality of contacts from diverse service providers.

31. A method as recited in claim 23, further comprising a step for generating a link on the user interface for adding a new contact.

32. A method as recited in claim 23, wherein the user interface displays a plurality of contacts from diverse service providers, the method further comprising acts of:

receiving user input to select a specific contact;

selecting the specific contact; and

initiating a new real-time conversation with the specific contact.

33. In a system capable of real-time communication with one or more contacts at one or more other systems, a computer program product comprising one or more computer readable media that implement a method of tracking real-time communication data, within a single contact tracking application that tracks real-time communication data for real-time communication using any of a plurality of diverse real-time communication providers or applications, the method comprising steps for:

synchronizing a global real-time communication data store with real-time communication data from each of a plurality of diverse real-time communication applications corresponding to a plurality of diverse real-time communication providers;

retrieving real-time communication data from the global real-time communication data store that corresponds to one or more contacts which are dynamically determined at the global real-time communication data store, based on one or more properties associated with the real-time communication data, to be one or more recent contacts; and

generating a user interface for displaying the one or more recent contacts.

34. A computer program product as recited in claim 33, wherein the one or more properties comprise a communication time and communication count for the one or more contacts, and wherein display of the one or more recent contacts is ordered on the user interface by a weighted combination of the communication time and communication count.

35. A computer program product as recited in claim 33, the method further comprising steps for:

retrieving, from the global real-time communication data store, real-time communication data corresponding to one or more contacts identified as pinned contacts for which display of the corresponding real-time communication data is preferred; and

generating a user interface for displaying the one or more pinned contacts.

36. A computer program product as recited in claim 35, wherein the generated user interface comprises separate pinned contact and recent contact portions.

37. A computer program product as recited in claim 35, wherein display of the one or more pinned contacts is ordered on the user interface alphabetically.

38. A computer program product as recited in claim 35, wherein the real-time communication data corresponding to the one or more pinned contacts comprises unread notifications data.

39. A computer program product as recited in claim 33, wherein the real-time communication data corresponding to the one or more contacts dynamically determined to be one or more recent contacts comprises presence.

40. A computer program product as recited in claim 33, the method further comprising a step for generating a text entry box on the user interface for searching for a contact.

41. A computer program product as recited in claim 33, the method further comprising a step for periodically retrieving real-time communication data from at least one of the plurality of diverse real-time communication applications.

42. A computer program product as recited in claim 33, wherein the user interface displays a plurality of contacts from diverse service providers, the method further comprising acts of:

receiving user input to select a specific contact;

selecting the specific contact; and

initiating an e-mail message for the specific contact.

43. A computer program product as recited in claim 33, wherein a particular contact is displayed as a pinned contact, the method further comprising a step for unpinning a previously pinned contact.

44. A computer program product as recited in claim 33, the method further comprising a step for generating a separate flyout user interface for displaying all contacts.